



MAR 22 2000

J. D. WILLIAMS
STATE CONTROLLEROFFICE OF THE STATE CONTROLLER
STATE CAPITOL700 W. STATE STREET
P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0011e-mail: sccount@state.idaho.gov
(208) 334-3100
FAX 334-2671KEITH L. JOHNSON
CHIEF DEPUTY STATE CONTROLLERPEGGY J. HAAR
ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION STATEWIDE PAYROLLLAIRD A. JUSTIN
ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION COMPUTER SERVICESSTEVE J. ALLISON
ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION STATEWIDE ACCOUNTING

As a statewide elected official, I have great concern and feel a responsibility for the general well being of Idaho's ecological and economic interests. As a member of the State Board of Land Commissioners, I am also responsible for the direction, control and disposition of 2.4 million acres of public ground. These dual roles require I do my best to protect the often-competing economic and environmental interests of Idaho.

One of the most important issues facing Idaho today is the management of our water. Water is the lifeblood of our state, playing a vital role in countless capacities including shipping, logging, farming, recreation and electricity. As a long-time public servant in Idaho, I have gained a great deal of experience by reviewing and evaluating similar situations, and I know full well the difficulties that result when environments and livelihoods collide. So, it is after careful consideration of a vast amount of information, I must conclude any decision to breach lower Snake River dams at this time is speculative at best and should therefore be avoided. How Idaho's water is utilized in the costly battle to save fish habitat must be decided carefully, judicially and locally.

Dam breaching will have palpable and far-reaching negative effects on the working people in Idaho. Viable economic activity will return only after recovery, 24-48 years into the future. We can be assured jobs will be lost if the dams are breached, but we cannot be assured salmon will be saved as a result. Gambling on what might happen 25 years from now with the livelihoods of current working Idahoans is a form of environmental and economic Roulette, bankrupt of any responsible natural resource management. Until science can provide reliable assurance that the salmon and steelhead stocks will actually recover from dam breaching, the existing livelihoods of Idahoans must remain paramount.

1 In addition, the evidence presented by the PATH scientists to support dam breaching
2 focused on the best case scenario for the viability of salmon under such an option.
However, the estimated effects on salmon viability under a bargaining alternative focused on
the worst case scenario. Furthermore, secondary environmental impacts were not even
considered. If the dams in the lower Snake River are destroyed, 37,000 acres of farmland
will be left fallow. Farming gives life to the land by providing habitat for countless
species. If we decide to breach the dams we must consider the viability of this
ecosystem, as well.

When I talk with the working families of Idaho and then reflect on the authority of the Army Corps of Engineers, I can empathize with the many people who feel alienated from their government. Cynicism is inevitable when 150 scientists convene to determine the best options for Idaho's resources, then offer only one - pull the plug on the dams and see what happens. Distrust is guaranteed when an environmental group in support of dam destruction, American Rivers, is funded by a Houston-based company producing gas-fired turbines. It is the people living, working and raising their families in Idaho who are best able to make common sense decisions regarding our rivers, not the federal government. I was born and raised here, and I, too, take offense at the idea Idahoans do not care about Idaho's environment. The decision to take away income should not be based upon speculations, theories and wishful ideas. After reading your report it is obvious the science does not exist to offer clear direction in this decision.

Any solution to this issue must consider and encompass all sides. Idaho will accept her fair burden in the fight to save the salmon, but dam destruction, which is also economic destruction, is neither the only solution nor the best solution. Idaho is, and will be a state of opportunity, but only if Idahoans are allowed to utilize our natural resources in a responsible manner for the benefit of our working families.

Dam breaching will have palpable and far-reaching negative effects on the working people in Idaho. Visible economic activity will return only after recovery, 24-48 years into the future. We can be assured jobs will be lost if the dams are breached, but we cannot be assured salmon will be saved as a result. Clamming on what might happen 25 years from now with the livelihoods of current working Idahoans is a form of environmental and economic roulette. Breaching of any responsible natural resource management. Until science can provide reliable assurance that the salmon and steelhead stocks will actually recover from dam breaching, the existing livelihoods of Idahoans must remain paramount.

In addition, the evidence presented by the FATH scenarios to support dam breaching focused on the best case scenario for the viability of salmon under such an option. However, the estimated effects on salmon viability under a breaching alternative focused on the worst case scenario. Furthermore, secondary environmental impacts were not even considered. If the dams in the lower Snake River are destroyed, 15,000 acres of farmland will be left fallow. Farming gives life to the land by providing habitat for countless species. If we decide to breach the dams we must consider the viability of this ecosystem as well.